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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD, JR., AND E. D. COPE.

— Perhaps the Secretary of the Treasury desires to aid the friends of repeal by a *reductio ad absurdum* of some of the provisions of our tariff law. By a ruling of his department made some time last month, all books coming through the foreign mail for private persons are charged a duty of 25 p. c. if of the value of \$1.00 and over. To collect this amount the book must be sent from the post-office to the custom house, then from the custom house to the appraiser's store, where a valuation is put on it. It is then returned to the custom house, from which a notice is issued to the addressee. All this requires the filling of blanks and the obtaining of the signatures of eleven or twelve officials, by which the government is richer frequently by 25 or 50 cents. A more disreputable law it would be difficult to imagine. Only the poor student is taxed in his efforts to elevate himself above the general dead level. The aspirations of the seeker for knowledge have, it seems, to be paid for, although by following them the student usually resigns the opportunity of financial success in life. We know very well that it is not the producers of books in this country that desire protection. The sale of their wares abroad depends on their merits, and the production is not to be stimulated by a protective duty. It is the publisher who, like another noted character, sits

“Hard by the tree of knowledge,”

to whom we are indebted for this beautiful piece of legislation. Of course we may be wrong. It may be clear to greater minds than ours, that by taxing the books of Gegenbaur, Claude Bernard and Owen, we develop our native genius, and cause little *fac-similes* of these gentlemen to come immediately into being. By increasing the pressure we might squeeze out Meissoniers and Whistlers. Tighten the prohibition, and hear the land resound with the harmonies and melodies of a crop of Verdis, Wagners and Sullivans. But possibly the framers of this law were moved by far different aims. They wish to prevent the influx of corrupting scientific literature into the country. Haeckel, Darwin and such men should not be permitted to instill poison into the minds of our young men and women. Or if people will have it, like poison, they must pay for it.

No doubt the tax on foreign animals for zoölogical gardens was also intended to prevent the spread of immorality—animals

imported for breeding purposes being free. The tax on natural history collections from foreign countries is without exception, because the animals being in bottles, cannot breed.

We are not opposed to a protective tariff under certain circumstances, but we are opposed to a tax on the intellectual development of our people. It is worse than blood-money, it is soul-money. It is a discrimination against the cultivators of thought and mind, and intelligent members of our National Legislature must surely, ere long, see it in this light.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

KNOWLEDGE.¹—We hail with pleasure the advent of a new scientific periodical, devoted not to any one branch of scientific inquiry, but to all, and giving promise, from the character of the issues of the first four months of this year, to prove not only a valuable but also a highly interesting addition to the periodical literature of the English language.

This weekly magazine, ably edited by the well-known astronomer and lecturer, Richard A. Proctor, seconded by numerous scientific men whose names are guarantees of an excellent quality of work, is conceived upon a somewhat different plan to the now well-established *Nature*, to which it bids fair to prove a formidable rival. While *Nature* is principally a scientific newspaper, giving reviews of recent works and notices of current scientific events, *Knowledge* is chiefly occupied with lively short articles upon the topics which at the moment possess most interest. Among these we notice a series of papers in which the editor gives a common-sense explanation of the purposes of the Great Pyramid, refuting utterly the wild fancies indulged in by Piazzi Smith and others, and showing that the passages in the vast pile were most probably formed for the orientation of the pyramid, and used afterwards for astronomical or rather astrological observations during and in connection with the life of Cheops, the king whose sepulchre it finally became. Among other contributors we notice the names of Professor Grant Allen, who in his usual happy style gives us a "Beetle's view of life," and also a series of papers upon "Our Ancestors," the Euskarian or Silure, the Celt, the Teuton; of Dr. Ball, astronomer royal for Ireland; of Dr. W. B. Carpenter, Dr. Andrew Wilson and H. J. Slack, all of them writers whose power of description is equal to their acknowledged acquaintance with the subjects they treat upon. The old prejudice against the popularization of science is rapidly passing away; the leaders in scientific thought, the Huxleys, the Darwins, and their friendly rivals, find time to tell the people some of what they know, with

¹ *Knowledge*, an illustrated Magazine of Science, plainly worded—exactly described. Conducted by RICHARD A. PROCTOR. Wyman & Sons, Gt. Queen St., W. C. London, England.